
Exhibit A

Judge Laura Taylor Swain

United States District Court

Dear Judge Swain,

I am Charles Bennett's mother and am writing to you about my son. It is a difficult letter to write for it brings me back to the moment I first saw him in the hospital. When he became conscious I saw the agony of his suffering visible on his face and when I looked into his eyes, I saw his deep remorse, shame and sorrow, a remorse so deep, he took his life believing that even his own mother wouldn't love him. Taking his life was not about escaping responsibility, for all I have seen him do since that moment of consciousness, is take responsibility.

Every day I see him struggle with his sorrow and guilt and the pain harm and betrayal he caused. Every day I see him try to make amends to his family by seeking ways to help. He does all he can for his sister Kelly and so kindly helps me, and tries to make his Aunt's life easier by helping care for her and her dog, preparing meals for her and doing whatever he can to show his love. Most importantly, he works hard at keeping himself from any kind of self-pity. He volunteered at Catholic Charities and has been teaching English to adults once a week in a program at Neighborhood House, a community center on the West side of Saint Paul for over a year. He has worked very hard at trying to understand how and why he did what he did and attends AA meetings every week and has gone through a year of counseling and psychiatric care.

I must plead his case for him for he won't. He believes serving time in prison will help some of his victim gain some relief. We often talk long into the night about what happened and why. As far as I can understand he never had the intent of hurting people, or making himself rich. I know it is hard to believe his intentions were not evil, but part of him was held under the spell of how happy people were when they received money. He always liked helping people, even as a boy.

It began with his father. It didn't seem so wrong to take his father's money and use some of it and then give it back with interest and drugs and alcohol helped to quiet his conscience. I think his moral beliefs were compromised at a time in life when he was weakened perhaps, because of his age, and an unrecognized depression and perhaps because he lived alone, while his friends had either married or found partners, and perhaps because of the shock I know he felt when the things he believed in fell apart with the collapse of Wall Street and our economy.

When he was younger, he always found a positive way to handle misfortune. As a teen he became involved in football. As a young lawyer when he became worried his job was not fulfilling him, he left his much respected law position to travel around the country and left his career again because he felt he could only understand America by living in France. Unfortunately, as he grew older, he didn't have the same energy of his youth and fixing things with an adventure wasn't so easy.

I believe his depression slowly grew, turning to despair over time, so that neither alcohol nor drugs could stop the downward spiral into the delusional thinking that drove him to take more risks thinking he could make everything turn out alright. In the past, he was able to do this.

He survived his difficult teen years when a divorce and messy child custody case brought great emotional turmoil. I had changed and I think the drastic changes he experienced were very hard on him. I was working, and trying to raise the children while going to classes to get my GED. I was also becoming more and more involved in the women's movement and a new sexuality at the same time he was going through his own puberty. His father was also in a new relationship and when he went to live with his father he had to navigate his way through his parents upsetting lives.

He used football to help him deal with changing schools and after graduating, he pushed himself. He had to work hard to put himself through college, get his master's degree and finish law school. Through his entire struggle he never blamed his childhood for any of his hardships, and he still won't hear of it having anything to do with what he did.

I plead my son's case because I believe circumstances weakened his moral strength at a time when he was vulnerable. He has deep remorse and will live with the harm he caused for the rest of his life, but in spite of that, I believe he will be able to do so much good in the world. He is very intelligent, he has been humbled by the love his family has shown him, something I don't think he ever really felt for he was thrown on his own resources at a young age. My son wants to make amends in whatever way he can. I only hope you give him that opportunity and allow him to continue on this positive path.

It's not easy for me to think of my child going to prison but I try to stay strong for him for he believes in the fairness of the law and justice. Although my life at this time is a struggle, I am full of gratitude for my son's life, for him standing here on this earth, ready to take complete responsibility for what he did without trying to find an excuse.

I hope and pray you will look at his life as a whole and give him the shortest sentence possible so he can return to his family and be of service to those he harmed as well as others in the community he may be able to help.

As difficult as this has been for me, for my family, for his friends, I have seen my son's atoning heart. I have also seen the love of his brothers and sisters, of his niece and nephews and brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and I am proud of all of them, but especially him. I believe every time anyone takes responsibility for what they do, honestly face the consequences of the harm s/he has done; the world becomes a better place for everyone.

I pray for your understanding and compassionate justice.

Respectfully yours,

Betty LaSorella